

Artists-Collins 10F2 ✓

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Portrait of a mobster

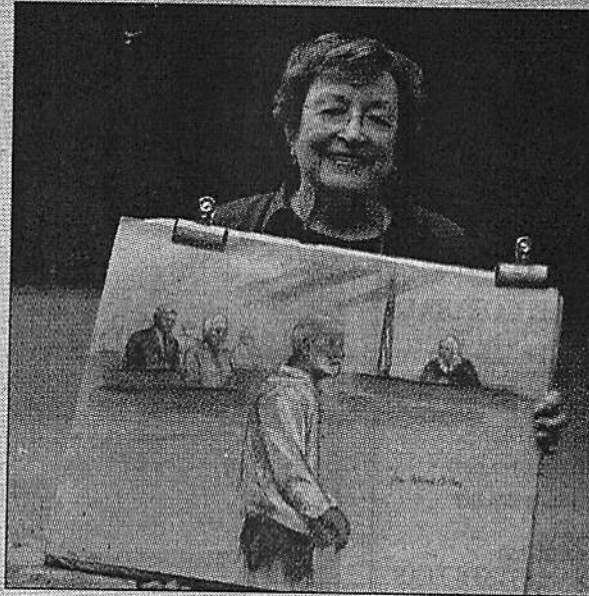
Duxbury artist sketches infamous 'Whitey' Bulger

By JUSTIN GRAEBER, CLIPPER EDITOR
JUSTIN@DUXBURYCLIPPER.COM

After Boston's most famous runaway criminal finally got his day in court, a sketch of James "Whitey" Bulger splashed across front pages of newspapers all over the country — all courtesy of the nimble fingers of Duxbury artist Jane Collins.

Collins is a well-respected artist in her own right, but she first got into doing courtroom sketches in 1980, when someone she knew got her connected with the news director at Channel 5.

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Collins holds her sketch of Whitey Bulger. His brother, Billy, and the twin sister of his girlfriend Catherine Greig can be seen in the background.



Until Whitey, Collins said her most high profile sketch was of "shoe-bomber" Richard Reid.

Duxbury artist sketches 'Whitey'

"I always kind of thought I could do it because I'm good at portraits," Collins said.

"So I tried. I did some little drawings, I brought them in."

Because cameras aren't allowed in federal courtrooms, sometimes the only image the public gets of a defendant is a sketch drawn by an artist. Collins said the way she approaches courtroom sketching is "very different" from how she'll tackle her own art projects — in court, speed is of the essence.

"It's not just a matter of being able to draw," she said.

Although she didn't get a phone call for quite some time, eventually the phone rang, and the voice on the other end said "court starts at 9:30 a.m."

"That was a calamity that day," Collins said. Not only did she bring too much stuff (courtroom sketch artists tend to travel light), after walking past a row of reporters she initially sat down on the wrong side of the courtroom, where she couldn't see the defendant. Red-faced with embarrassment, she walked around, searching for an empty chair, finally locating a seat toward the middle of the room. After a moment, however, she found no respite there either.

"This big court officer walked up to me and said, 'Madam, that's the defendant's chair,'" Collins said. He had been testifying on the witness stand.

Despite that inauspicious beginning, Collins has become an accomplished courtroom sketch artist. She's drawn famous defendants before, including Sal DiMasi and the "shoebomber" Richard Reid. She said that Reid was the

biggest case she ever covered — until Whitey's capture.

Collins remembers Bulger's appearance with the eye for detail of a trained artist.

"My impression was that he's very thin," she said. "He doesn't look like the Whitey you remember. He looks like an older man, sunken in his chest."

She also said his bald, "shiny" head was striking, and the beard and moustache hid his profile — frustrating for an artist looking for facial features.

While Collins was waiting for Bulger to come into the room, she noticed Margaret McCusker, the twin sister of Bulger's girlfriend Catherine Greig, sitting in the audience. A few rows behind her was William "Billy" Bulger, Whitey's brother and former Massachusetts Senate President. She quickly sketched the conflicted faces of the defendants' siblings, leaving space for the famous gangster.

She said that because Bulger wasn't in court for very long, she had to draw fast and furious.

"Someone who wasn't used to working like mad couldn't have done it," she said.

Greig's appearance was even briefer, and Collins said she would have liked a few more minutes to sketch.

Collins said she didn't feel intimidated by Bulger, despite the mobster's brutal reputation.

"I had none of that feeling at all," she said, although the anguish was plain on the faces of the family members of Bulger's alleged victims.

Collins said she merely saw an elderly man.

"Frankly, he looks like my brother, who's a professor at